

## **Recommendations for Senate Bill 795**

### **State Board of Education/Department of Public Instruction**

#### **Overall Recommendations**

1. Major changes in education policy for North Carolina should be addressed in the long session when there is the time necessary for deliberation and input.
2. In the 2012 short session, the primary funding priority is restoring the approximately \$759 million in State general funds eliminated from the public schools budget last session; this restoration is accomplished by eliminating the negative reserve/discretionary cut of approximately \$500 million and restoring \$259 million in state funding for state positions that have been funded temporarily through federal funding (EduJobs) that expires this year.

#### **Specific Recommendations by Section:**

##### **Part I: Improve K-3 Literacy**

*This follows the Florida model for a plan for reading achievement that includes assessments, diagnostics, mandatory third grade summer boot camp for students who are not on grade level, and required retention (with various exceptions) if reading is not on grade level by the end of the third grade.*

1. Include PreK (“PreK-3 Literacy”)

Research is clear on the importance of PreK as an investment for literacy, especially for at risk children.

##### **PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Require curriculum and assessments to align across PreK-3 span
  - b. Provide a classroom allotment model for PreK for at risk students in the public schools (rather than funding slots) in order to serve more students with the same amount of funds and provide a more efficient model for funding PreK in the public schools (the slot model can continue for private PreK providers); model should include role for PreK in the public schools.
  - c. Restore funding for PreK.
2. Begin extended learning opportunities by first grade – not third grade bootcamp.

Research is clear on the importance of working as soon as possible with enriched activities that address deficits in language acquisition and provides opportunities needed to address disabilities that affect language and reading. These learning opportunities provided outside of the regular calendar also provide opportunities to take advantage of federally-funded meals for low-income students that are essential for their well-being.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Allow greater calendar flexibility at the local level in order to enable school districts to be creative in finding ways to provide extended learning environments outside of the regular school day and to shorten interruptions in learning.
  - b. Instead of directing one prescriptive “bootcamp,” allow school districts the flexibility and the funding to create extended learning opportunities to meet a variety of needs of students, including those related to their developmental stage and any disabilities.
  - c. Instead of eliminating literacy from school improvement plans, direct these plans to identify the extended learning opportunities that will be used by that school.
3. Provide funding for additional professional development for PreK-3 teachers that is focused on how to improve students’ literacy

North Carolina’s experience with the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade gateway demonstrated that teachers do not have all of the skills needed for developing reading portfolios, using diagnostics, and Response to Intervention (RTI) processes that are essential in identifying and working with children with disabilities.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Provide funding for professional development.
  - b. Extend the school calendar in order to have the days necessary for continuing professional development and for schools to effectively use professional learning communities.
4. Remove mandatory retention as a part of the model.

North Carolina’s experience with mandatory standards showed that it created an emphasis on documentation and due process rather than learning; research does not support retention.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Use school accountability models to hold schools accountable for progress in literacy.
- b. If retention is kept, it is essential in high stakes accountability for students to provide early warning of not meeting a standard by providing an earlier standardized assessment. A standardized test should be added at the end of the second grade or as a pre-test at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## **Part II: State Employee Literacy Volunteer Leave Time**

*This provides leave for state employees to volunteer in a literacy program for up to five hours a month.*

No recommendations

## **Part III: School Performance Grades**

*The Florida school report card model is used for providing a school with a letter grade of A-F based on a complex formula.*

1. Include growth and the performance by subgroups as key elements of the model.  
North Carolina already has invested in an updating of its “school report card” that identifies these key indicators that are tied to the overall accountability model.

### **PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Replace the bill language with the new READY accountability model that identifies key measures of absolute performance and growth.
2. Replace the letter grade with clear, transparent information on a number of critical performance indicators (see.

In development of the State Board’s new READY model, focus groups from the business community, parents, and superintendents identified that overall grades over simplify and hide meaningful information; these focus groups preferred to let the various indicators stand on their own.

### **PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Use the report card approach developed after extensive study and involvement of stakeholder groups in the READY model.
- b. While the focus group research indicated a preference to not have any categorization, if a categorization scheme is used, a more effective model than the letter grade is a red-yellow-green coding of each of the key indicators.

## **Part IV: Maximize Instructional Time**

*Annual assessments and final exams must occur in the final 10 instructional days for year-long courses and in the final 5 instructional days for semester-long courses.*

1. Provide a broader testing window.

The more restricted window limits local decision-making; may restrict feasibility of using online testing for statewide assessments (plan for all testing to be online in 2014-15); and does not allow time for remedial instruction and retesting.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

Eliminate 115C-174.12(a) ,or increase the number of days, or provide more exemptions to cover the need for online testing window and remediation

**Part V: Adjustments to School Calendar Start and End Dates**

*Current law is revised from a start date not before August 25 to the next to the last Monday in August.*

1. Revise to allow local boards to develop calendars that are aligned with the community colleges and to complete testing before the winter break.

The bi-partisan Career and College Promise legislation passed in 2011 creates better opportunities for pathways for high school students into community college and makes more crucial the alignment of the calendars.

There is strong consensus in the education community of the need to test before winter break.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Return calendar flexibility to local school districts; if not fully provided, change 115C-84.2(d) from “the next to the last Monday in August” to the “second Monday in August.”

**Part VI. Funding for the Addition of Five Instructional Days Within the Existing School Calendar**

*This funds the five additional days to the school calendar provided in the 2011 Session.*

No recommendations.

**Part VII: Establish NC Teacher Corps**

*This section mirrors the NC Teacher Corp already in place through Race to the Top. It is a recruitment model for recent college graduates and mid-career professionals.*

1. Provide for NC Teacher Corps and Teaching Fellows

NC Teacher Corps is already in place (through Race to the Top), with the first cohort being recruited now for placement in schools this coming fall (2012-13 school year). This legislation is therefore unnecessary, but is consistent with the program being implemented by the State Board and Department of Public Instruction that is focused on attracting individuals who decide later in their education or career to become teachers.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Also provide funding for Teaching Fellows, which addresses the need in the state to attract students into teaching profession as they enter college.

**Part VIII: Strengthen Teacher Licensure**

*Existing licensure law is modified to require all Elementary Education teachers to meet standards set on exams for Language Arts and Mathematics and to require literacy renewal credits.*

No recommendations. The bill is consistent with State Board and Department of Public Instruction efforts.

**Part IX: Proof of State-Funded Liability Insurance**

*In the 2011 Session the General Assembly appropriated funds for professional liability insurance that would eliminate any need for teachers or other public school employees to obtain insurance through membership in professional associations (or through other means). This requires the State Board to annually notify employees of this coverage.*

No recommendations.

**Part X: Pay for Excellence**

*A new provision would require each local board to develop a system of performance pay for all licensed personnel to implement in the 2013-2014 year. It requires certain criteria to be included in the local model.*

1. Delay legislation until the statewide model for evaluating teacher effectiveness is completed and the salary structure is in place for a pay for performance model.

Research demonstrates what is required to measure effectiveness validly and reliably: the North Carolina plan (funded through Race to the Top) bases the new statewide system for measuring teacher effectiveness on this research and will provide districts with common measures and a model.

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. No legislation is needed until these systems are in place: the legislation could require the State Board to provide a report to Education Oversight on a model that could then be the basis for a legislative pay for excellence model.
2. Change the model from requiring all districts to create plans to having the state provide the essential measurement infrastructure needed and then allow local flexibility in how to reward performance (all districts already have this flexibility, and some exercise it).

Many school districts – especially small rural and low-wealth – do not have the capacity to develop their own models that are valid and reliable; some school districts have developed their own pay differentials for hard-to-staff schools or subject areas and other locally determined criteria and (evaluation report coming out soon).

**PCS/Amendment Recommendations:**

- a. Provide for the state to complete the essential parts of a framework for measuring teacher effectiveness (including common exams in all subject areas) and then allow local boards to supplement this model with a locally determined structure for awarding pay for meeting certain performance benchmarks
- b. Consider/study/develop a statewide performance pay structure (as with the ABCs) to ensure consistency and comparability across districts; consider this as part of a complete revisiting of the state salary structure

**Part XI: End Tenure**

*This eliminates the career status (or tenure) employment for all teachers and replaces it with one-year contracts. At the end of the contract the teacher has at-will status and can be non-renewed for any reason that is not in violation of law. This same standard is also applied at the end of contracts for school administrators.*

1. Delay changes to tenure until the new teacher evaluation system is developed.
  - Employment decisions should be aligned with the teacher evaluation system; all components will be in place to allow deliberation by the General Assembly in 2013 of changes to the employment system.
  - Recommendation: Do not address tenure in the short session; legislation could require the State Board and Department to provide a report to the General Assembly on the professional development system that could frame deliberation on any changes to the employment system.
2. Address other funding needs for developing and retaining effective teachers
  - The primary issue in developing and retaining effective teachers is addressing the supports in place, including providing mentors, time for professional learning communities, and the opportunities and infrastructure for effective professional development.

- Restore funding to the state budget that is essential for developing and retaining effective teachers.

## **Part XII: Elimination of Public Financing for Superintendent of Public Instruction**

*The position of Superintendent of Public Instruction is eliminated from the Council of State offices that are eligible for public financing.*

This does not relate to improving educational opportunities and should not be included in a bill focused public schools.

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